

Do you remember building a clubhouse in the back yard as a kid? It might have been an old sheet thrown over some propped-up sticks, or a hollow space under a bush, or if you were very lucky, a real live tree house your parents helped you build. But whatever and wherever your little fort was, it was yours, and maybe you'd let a few friends in. It would be your clubhouse; the place you'd go to conspire against parents and teachers and to say all the nasty things about the school bullies that you couldn't say to their faces without risking bodily injury.

It wasn't a place to be yourself; it was a place to be more than yourself. It was a place where you set the rules and things that would be unutterable, even unthinkable at home or on the playground, could be giggled over and mocked and made manageable.

I've been often reminded of a good friend's clubhouse - some scrap lumber nailed together into a little hut we could barely fit into at 10 years old - while trying to participate in prolife activities, from protests to volunteer counseling to internet debate. One summer spent attempting to work with a particular prolife group - I won't be naming names here, that's not the point - comes first and foremost to mind. My elementary-school friend and I would sit in her clubhouse and write nasty little ditties about another girl who picked on us both, and draw exaggeratedly ugly pictures of her (I think, trying to look back objectively, that she was actually rather pretty). The proliferers of this group would rant about everyone opposed to their belief system.

That ended up including a whole lot of people.

Of course, they said that all prochoicers were self-obsessed, ignorant, immoral, utterly awful people. Now, I know they're not. I suspect the proliferers who were saying it know they're not. My best friend is prochoice; and sheltered as they may attempt to be, I can't believe these very traditional proliferers don't know at least one good person who's also prochoice, too. So that's an exaggeration and a generalization; but to a point it's fair within the context. It's like the very ugly drawings of the very pretty girl who was also a bully; it's not supposed to be accurate, it's supposed to make you feel better. This is the prolife clubhouse, after all.

Unfortunately, though, it didn't stop there. Anyone who wasn't Christian, and more specifically their stripe of Christian, was ignorant and mislead and probably had ulterior motives in anything they said or did. Anyone who supported sex ed in schools, they said, was promoting abortion and the

moral decay of our country. Then there was the rant about girls today wearing 'immodest' clothing, and of course we've got to get a jab or two in at the political liberals and the feminists, and the animal rights folks, and the atheists, the agnostics, and the gays and the pagans (who are really just closet devil-worshippers, after all.)

I have a message for all the traditional, conservative, and Christian proliferers who want to use the prolife movement as a forum to vent their frustrations about alternative religions and lifestyles and liberal politics, about short skirts and new math.

This is not your clubhouse.

This is the prolife clubhouse. We who come here are here for one reason; because we believe all children conceived have a right to keep their lives. We're human here, yes, and we're going to rant and rave and occasionally and let off some steam - but not about each other.

Because that's the other important thing about clubhouses; they're supposed to be about loyalty. Secret handshakes, pricking yourselves with sewing needles so you can become blood brothers, and swearing you'll be best friends forever. They're about keeping each other's secrets, accepting each other's weaknesses, being a united front against the bullies of the playground or the world.

In the prolife clubhouse there are Christians of all denominations, and political conservatives, and traditional family sorts. Lots of them, and they've done a lot of good. But there are also pagans, and gays, and atheists and political liberals. There are girls with tattoos wearing short skirts; there are guys with tattoos wearing short skirts sometimes, too. There are tree-hugging dirt-worshippers and Jesus freaks. We're all here because we agree that abortion is a great big ugly bully. And just like when we were kids in our clubhouses and needed the geeky girl who could do everybody's math homework, and the boy whose mom always made brownies, and the almost popular kid who'd tell the rest of the kids to back off when any of us were getting picked on - we need each other. All of us.

You may not see it, but we've all built this clubhouse. There's a whole lot of conservative Christian wood making the frame it, but there are the atheistic, scientific nails holding the structure together, too - because we need the zeal of the faithful, but we also need the scientific proof to show the rest of the world. That girl in the short skirt is a doorway, through which the rest of the skeptical, short-skirt wearing world may walk - and we want to invite them in, because they're the ones

at risk of choosing abortion. That liberal politician who works with everybody on all sides is the tree our clubhouse is built in, with roots in our communities, and the strength to support us. The folks with religions and lifestyles outside the mainstream are our windows, showing us new perspectives.

And you've got to admit, without nails to hold it together and a door to walk in through and windows to see out from, without a place to be built on, you'd have a pretty pathetic clubhouse - more like a rickety old box.

So if you want to make the prolife movement exclusive - if you want your clubhouse to be the politically conservative, Christian, homophobic, reactionary, anti-pagan, pro-chastity, wearing-turtlenecks-in-June club - then have fun in your box.

But this, the prolife movement, is not your clubhouse. You are not welcome to use it as your clubhouse, to scorn and scold the rest of us. You are not welcome to turn it into an unwelcoming place that others are afraid of; you are not welcome to divide us. Bullies are not allowed here.

Because this prolife clubhouse belongs to all of us, but more importantly, it belongs to more than 40 million more of us who will never be Christian or pagan, liberal or conservative, gay or straight, who can't show off their bodies or modestly conceal them because their bodies were brutally destroyed. They won't ever build clubhouses in their back yards; they won't ever have back yards, or best friends, or bullies or brownies or math homework. To the world, they're nameless and faceless and non-existent, but they shouldn't be to us. They're the reason why we built our clubhouse; they're our blood brothers and our soul sisters and our best friends forever, who we never got to know.

We're here for them. We're here to stand against abortion, to speak for those whose who have been denied a voice, a vote, a life - and if you want to be part of our clubhouse, you need to recognize that that's the biggest deal there is. Their deaths are something bigger and deeper and more important than any political philosophy or moral theory or religion.

Anyone, any type of person at all, who can remember that, is welcome in our clubhouse. Anyone who can't, isn't. Please feel free to take your toys and go home; we're not here to play.

Written by Sonya L. Volkhardt

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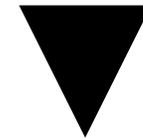
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*Written by Sonya L Volkhardt
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When
Human Life Begins**



**Pro-Life Alliance of
Gays and Lesbians**